

Sports Team Brand Commitment: Who Should Hop on the Bandwagon?

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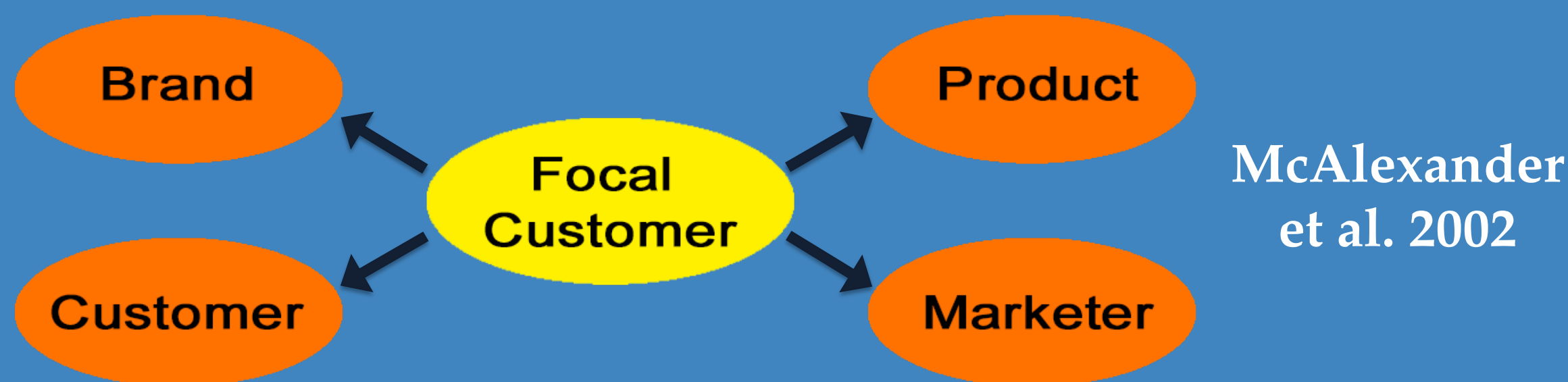
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Introduction

Brand Communities

- **Brand community:** a set of individuals who share a sense of value associated with a good or service provided by a given brand
- Commitment to a brand develops from customers' sense of belonging when they feel their needs are met by a brand's product
- The **Consumer-Centric Model** of the brand community shows the most important interactions of the focal customer with the brand in order to develop brand commitment



Sports Teams

- **Sports team** brand communities provide individuals with extensive opportunities for social interaction through watch parties, attending games, engaging in sports-related conversation, etc.
- This creates a strong **in-group** community for the fans of a team
- **Competition** among same-market brands fosters brand loyalty
- The competitive nature of sports furthers fans' feelings of support and loyalty for their team

“Sport differs from other sources of entertainment through evoking high levels of emotional attachment and identification”

Sutton et al. 1997

Research Question

How do bandwagon and loyal fans differ in terms of their benefits when supporting a high-achieving team?

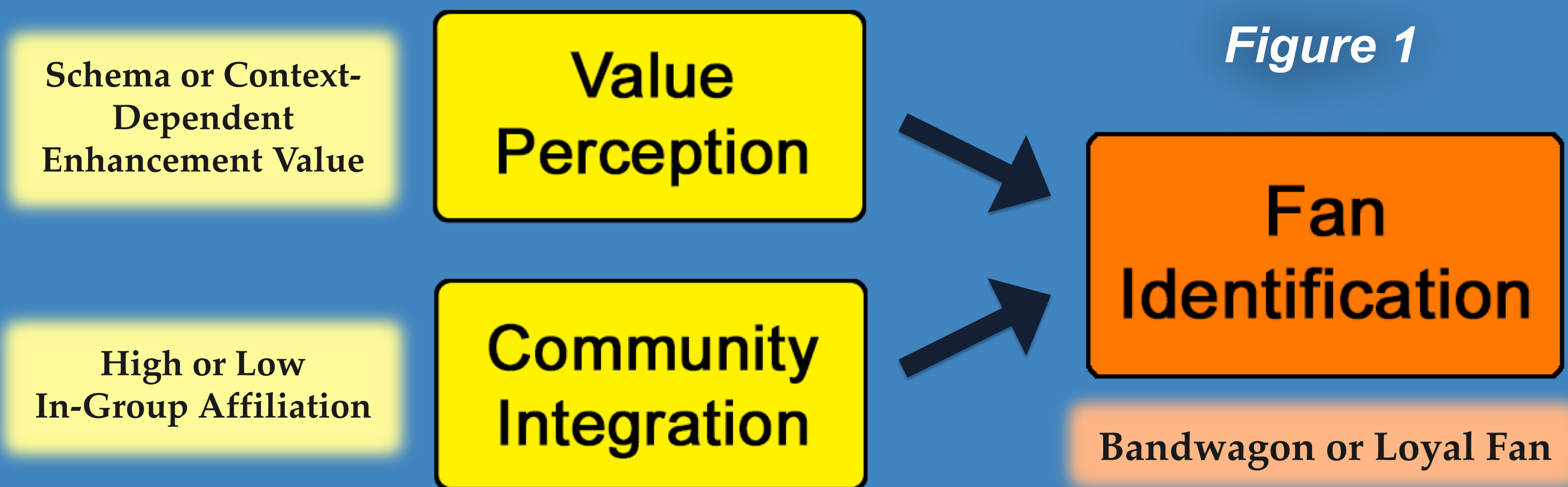
Methods

- I conducted a literature review of research articles and books for social psychology and marketing
- **Key Word Searches:** Brand commitment, bandwagon fans, loyal fans, product value, self-brand affiliation, luxury consumption, social identity, self-concept maintenance, in-groups, and social group identification

Fan Identification

Figure 1 shows the conditions for **fan identification** (team / brand loyalty) development

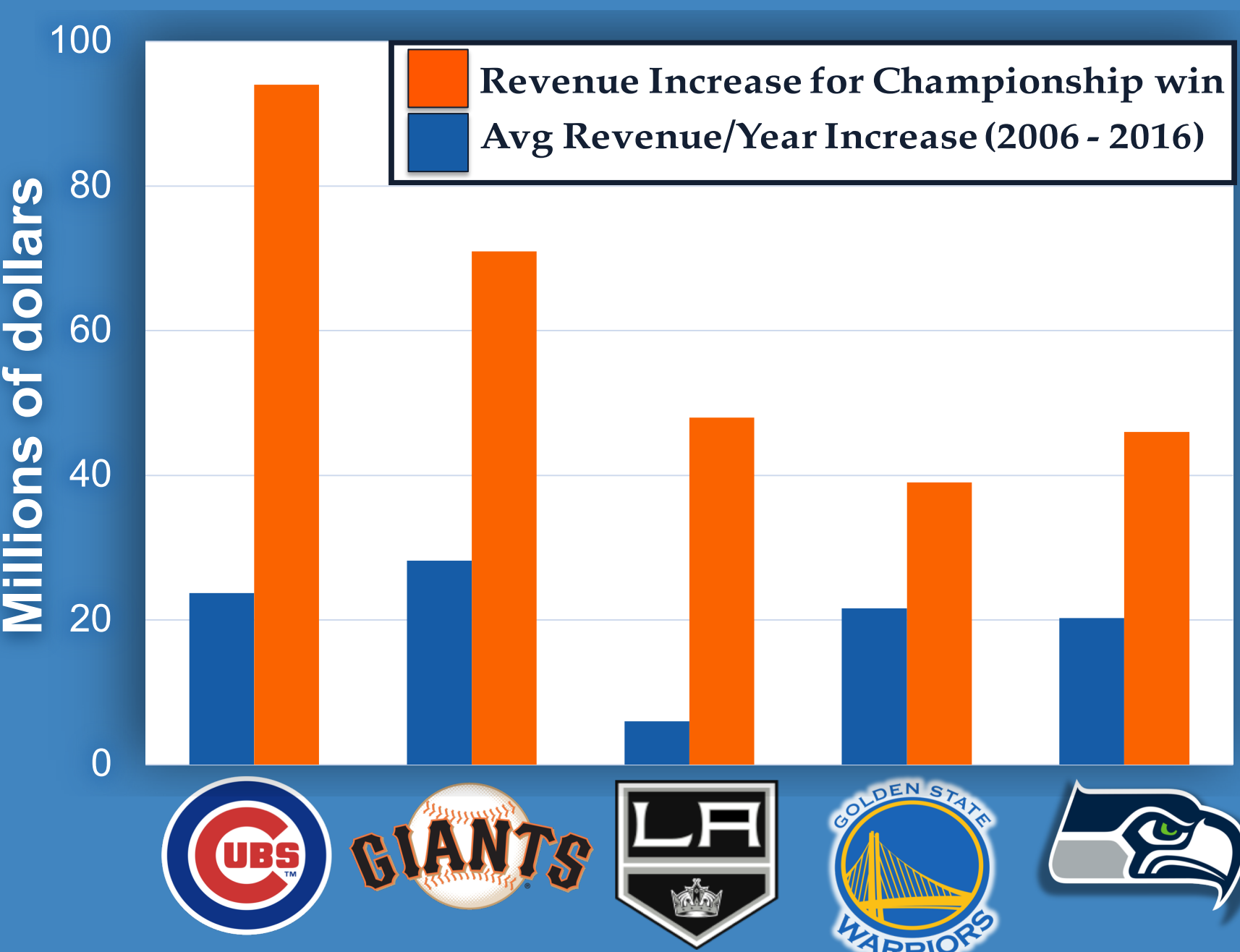
- **Value perception** is the consumer-derived value of a product, which can stem from a consumer's **schema** or the **context** of the product
 - **Schema-dependent enhancement value** is product value created by the consumer's emotional / personal association with the brand
 - **Context-dependent enhancement value** is a situationally dependent value for product (like for high-status / luxury product consumption)
- **Community integration** refers to the degree to which a consumer is affiliated with the brand community in-group, or the team's fan base



Bandwagon Fans

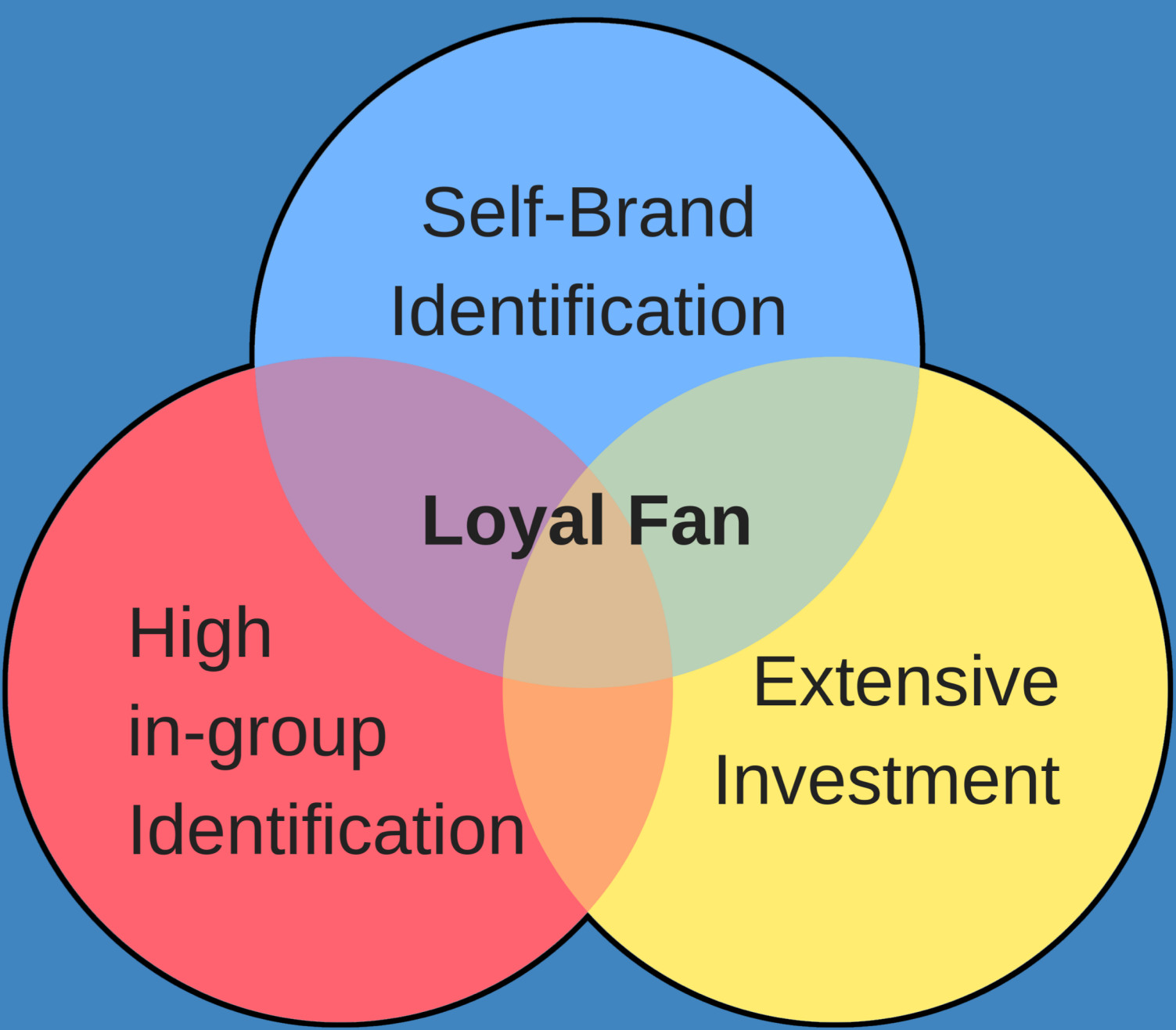
- **Conspicuous consumption behavior** is highly influenced by an interdependent self-concept and the power of conformity
- **Context-dependent enhancement value** for high-achieving sports teams, attracted by the team's situational status
- Also attracted by team's fan community and influence of conformity
- **Low in-group affiliation** and achievement-dependent satisfaction with team
- Lack of self-brand association and short-term commitment to team

High-Achieving Teams Attract Fans



Loyal Fans

- **Long-term consumption behavior** characteristics are self-brand association, high investment, and integration in fan community
- **Schema-dependent enhancement value** of product, derived from consumer's emotional or personal affiliation with the team
- **High in-group affiliation** and use of “we” pronoun when describing team or community
- Commitment due to self-brand association, not dependent on team achievement



Conclusion

The value of following a high-achieving team in the short-run is mainly **instrumental**, while the value for a loyal fan of a high-achieving team is primarily **intrinsic**.

In comparison to loyal fans' intrinsic benefits, the **instrumental benefits** of being a **bandwagon** fan are...

Not as consistent

- Instrumental benefits are not tied to high **in-group affiliation**
- Fans low in identification are less likely to consider themselves in-group members since product value is **context-dependent** rather than intrinsic

Not as personal

- Lack of **self-brand identification**, thus do not refer to sports team and fan community as “we”
- Lessened personal benefits of **self-esteem** enhancement from “basking in reflected glory”

Not as strong

- Brand communities with high **same-market competition** (like sports teams) produce stronger self-brand associations for consumers
- This effect allows for frequent **inter-group discrimination**, which enhances **self-esteem**
- Only applies when one has a high **in-group affiliation**

Implications

The investment of **bandwagon fans** during periods of high-achievement can generate team **revenue increases** significantly larger than average. However, **loyal fans** are valuable to teams because they provide relatively **stable revenue** for the brand regardless of team achievement.

- The influence of conformity and a high **instrumental** value for a product encourages short-term investment in a brand
- If brands understand how consumers derive value from their products, they can market accordingly
- Future research could explore the implications of these conclusions for brand communities outside of the sports realm

Future Research Opportunities

- How can brands transform consumers' instrumental value for their product into **intrinsic value** so that consumers develop brand loyalty and lengthen their investment in the brand?
- How can brands strengthen feelings of **in-group** and positive community attributes for a short-term customer to increase their brand commitment?
- How can **same-market competition** and its **intrinsic benefits** for a loyal consumer of a successful brand be applied to other markets?